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COMPOSITIONS ISOLATED FROM STROMAL CELLS AND METHODS FOR THEIR USE

Technical Field of the Invention

This invention relates to genes encoding proteins expressed in lymph node stromal cells from flaky skin (*fsn* -/-) mice and their use in therapeutic methods.

Background of the Invention

Lymph vessels and nodes are important components of the body's immune system. Lymph nodes are small lymphatic organs that are located in the path of lymph vessels. Large molecules and cells, including foreign substances, enter into the lymphatic vessels and, in circulating through these vessels, pass through the lymph nodes. Here, any foreign substances are concentrated and exposed to lymphocytes. This triggers a cascade of events that constitute an immune response, protecting the body from infection and from cancer.

Lymph nodes are surrounded by a dense connective tissue network that forms a supporting capsule. This network extends into the body of the lymph node, forming an additional framework of support. Throughout the remainder of the organ, a fine meshwork can be identified that comprises reticular fibres and the reticular cells that produce and surround the fibres. These features provide a support for the main functional cells of the lymphatic system, which are T- and B-lymphocytes. Additional cell types found in lymph nodes include macrophages, follicular dendritic cells, and endothelial cells that line the blood vessels servicing the node.

The cells within lymph nodes communicate with each other in order to defend the body against foreign substances. When a foreign substance, or antigen, is present, it is detected by macrophages and follicular dendritic cells that take up and process the antigen, and display parts of it on their cell surface. These cell surface antigens are then presented to T- and B-lymphocytes, causing them to proliferate and differentiate into activated T-lymphocytes and plasma cells, respectively. These cells are released into the circulation in order to seek out and destroy antigen. Some T- and B-lymphocytes will

also differentiate into memory cells. Should these cells come across the same antigen at a later date, the immune response will be more rapid.

Once activated T- and B-lymphocytes are released into the circulation, they can perform a variety of functions that leads to the eventual destruction of antigen. Activated T-lymphocytes can differentiate into cytotoxic lymphocytes (also known as killer T-cells) which recognise other cells that have foreign antigens on their surface and kill the cell by causing them to lyse. Activated T-lymphocytes can also differentiate into helper T-cells which will then secrete proteins in order to stimulate B-lymphocytes, and other T-lymphocytes, to respond to antigens. In addition, activated T-lymphocytes can differentiate into suppressor T-cells which secrete factors that suppress the activity of B-lymphocytes. Activated B-lymphocytes differentiate into plasma cells, which synthesise and secrete antibodies that bind to foreign antigens. The antibody-antigen complex is then detected and destroyed by macrophages, or by a group of blood constituents known as complement.

Lymph nodes can be dissociated and the resulting cells grown in culture. Cells that adhere to the tissue culture dishes can be maintained for some length of time and are known as stromal cells. The cultured cells are a heterogeneous population and can be made up of most cells residing within lymph nodes, such as reticular cells, follicular dendritic cells, macrophages and endothelial cells. It is well known that bone marrow stromal cells play a critical role in homing, growth and differentiation of hematopoietic progenitor cells. Proteins produced by stromal cells are necessary for the maintenance of plasma cells *in vitro*. Furthermore, stromal cells are known to secrete factors and present membrane bound receptors that are necessary for the survival of lymphoma cells.

An autosomal recessive mutation, designated flaky skin (*fsn* -/-), has been described in the inbred A/J mouse strain (The Jackson Laboratory, Bar Harbour, ME). The mice have a skin disorder similar to psoriasis in humans. Psoriasis is a common disease affecting 2% of the population, which is characterised by a chronic inflammation associated with thickening and scaling of the skin. Histology of skin lesions shows increased proliferation of the cells in the epidermis, the uppermost layer of skin, together with the abnormal presence of inflammatory cells, including lymphocytes, in the dermis, the layer of skin below the epidermis. While the cause of the disease is unclear, psoriasis

is associated with a disturbance of the immune system involving T lymphocytes. The disease occurs more frequently in family members, indicating the involvement of a genetic factor as well. Mice with the *fsn* gene mutation have not only a psoriatic-like skin disease but also other abnormalities involving cells of the immune and hemopoeitic system. These mice have markedly increased numbers of lymphocytes associated with enlarged lymphoid organs, including the spleen and lymph nodes. In addition, their livers are enlarged, and the mice are anaemic. Genes and proteins expressed in abnormal lymph nodes of *fsn-/-* mice may thus influence the development or function of cells of the immune and hemopoeitic system, the response of these cells in inflammatory disorders, and the responses of skin and other connective tissue cells to inflammatory signals. There is a need in the art to identify genes encoding proteins that function to modulate all cells of the immune system. These proteins from normal or abnormal lymph nodes may be useful in modifying the immune responses to tumour cells or infectious agents such as bacteria, viruses, protozoa and worms. Such proteins may be useful in disorders where the immune system initiates unfavourable reactions to the body, including Type I hypersensitivity reactions (such as hay fever, eczema, allergic rhinitis and asthma), and Type II hypersensitivity reactions (such as transfusion reactions and haemolytic disease of newborns). Other unfavourable reactions are initiated during Type III reactions, which are due to immune complexes forming in infected organs during persistent infection or in the lungs following repeated inhalation of materials from moulds, plants or animals, and in Type IV reactions in diseases such as leprosy, schistosomiasis and dermatitis.

Novel proteins of the immune system may also be useful in treating autoimmune diseases where the body recognises itself as foreign. Examples of such diseases include rheumatoid arthritis, Addison's disease, ulcerative colitis, dermatomyositis and lupus. Such proteins may also be useful during tissue transplantation, where the body will often recognise the transplanted tissue as foreign and attempt to kill it, and also in bone marrow transplantation when there is a high risk of graft-verus-host disease where the transplanted cells attack their host cells, often causing death..

There thus remains a need in the art for the identification and isolation of genes encoding proteins expressed in cells of the immune system for use in the development of

therapeutic agents for the treatment of disorders including those associated with the immune system.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides polypeptides expressed in lymph node stromal cells of *fsn* -/- mice, together with polynucleotides encoding such polypeptides, expression vectors and host cells comprising such polynucleotides, and methods for their use.

In specific embodiments, isolated polypeptides are provided that comprise an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of sequences recited in SEQ ID NO: 11-20, and variants of such sequences, as defined herein, together with polynucleotides encoding such polypeptides. Isolated polypeptides which comprise at least a functional portion of a polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of: (a) sequences recited in SEQ ID NO: 11-20; and (b) variants of a sequence of SEQ ID NO: 11-20, as defined herein, are also provided.

In other embodiments, the present invention provides isolated polynucleotides comprising a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of: (a) sequences recited in SEQ ID NO: 1-10; (b) complements of sequences recited in SEQ ID NO: 1-10; (c) reverse complements of sequences recited in SEQ ID NO: 1-10; (d) reverse sequences of sequences recited in SEQ ID NO: 1-10; and (e) variants of the sequences of (a) – (d), as defined herein.

In related embodiments, the present invention provides expression vectors comprising the above polynucleotides, together with host cells transformed with such vectors.

As detailed below, the isolated polynucleotides and polypeptides of the present invention may be usefully employed in the preparation of therapeutic agents for the treatment of immunological disorders.

Methods for modulating the growth of blood vessels, and for the treatment of disorders such as inflammatory disorders, disorders of the immune system, cancer, tumour-necrosis factor-mediated disorders, and viral disorders are also provided.

Examples of such disorders include HIV-infection; epithelial, lymphoid, myeloid, stromal and neuronal cancers; arthritis; inflammatory bowel disease; and cardiac failure.

The above-mentioned and additional features of the present invention, together with the manner of obtaining them, will be best understood by reference to the following more detailed description. All references disclosed herein are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety as if each was incorporated individually.

Detailed Description of the Invention

In one aspect, the present invention provides polynucleotides isolated from lymph node stromal cells of *fsn* -/- mice and isolated polypeptides encoded by such polynucleotides.

The term "polynucleotide(s)," as used herein, means a single or double-stranded polymer of deoxyribonucleotide or ribonucleotide bases and includes DNA and corresponding RNA molecules, including HnRNA and mRNA molecules, both sense and anti-sense strands, and comprehends cDNA, genomic DNA and recombinant DNA, as well as wholly or partially synthesized polynucleotides. An HnRNA molecule contains introns and corresponds to a DNA molecule in a generally one-to-one manner. An mRNA molecule corresponds to an HnRNA and DNA molecule from which the introns have been excised. A polynucleotide may consist of an entire gene, or any portion thereof. Operable anti-sense polynucleotides may comprise a fragment of the corresponding polynucleotide, and the definition of "polynucleotide" therefore includes all such operable anti-sense fragments. Anti-sense polynucleotides and techniques involving anti-sense polynucleotides are well known in the art and are described, for example, in Robinson-Benion et al. (1995), Antisense techniques, *Methods in Enzymol.* 254(23): 363-375 and Kawasaki et al. (1996), *Artific. Organs* 20 (8): 836-848.

In specific embodiments, the inventive polynucleotides comprise a DNA sequence selected from the group consisting of sequences provided in SEQ ID NO: 1-10, and variants of the sequences of SEQ ID NO: 1-10, as defined below. The present invention also encompasses polynucleotide sequences that differ from the disclosed sequences but which, due to the degeneracy of the genetic code, encode a polypeptide which is the same as that encoded by a polynucleotide sequence disclosed herein.

Polynucleotides that comprise complements of such DNA sequences, reverse complements of such DNA sequences or reverse sequences of such DNA sequences, together with variants of such sequences, are also provided. The definition of the terms "complement", "reverse complement" and "reverse sequence", as used herein, is best illustrated by the following example. For the sequence 5' AGGACC 3', the complement, reverse complement and reverse sequence are as follows:

complement	3' TCCTGG 5'
reverse complement	3' GGTCCT 5'
reverse sequence	5' CCAGGA 3'.

In another aspect, the present invention provides isolated polypeptides encoded, or partially encoded, by the above polynucleotides. The term "polypeptide", as used herein, encompasses amino acid chains of any length including full length proteins, wherein amino acid residues are linked by covalent peptide bonds. Polypeptides of the present invention may be naturally purified products, or may be produced partially or wholly using recombinant techniques. The term "polypeptide encoded by a polynucleotide" as used herein, includes polypeptides encoded by a nucleotide sequence which includes the partial isolated DNA sequences of the present invention. In specific embodiments, the inventive polypeptides comprise an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of sequences provided in SEQ ID NO: 11-20 and variants of such sequences.

All of the polynucleotides and polypeptides described herein are isolated and purified, as those terms are commonly used in the art.

As used herein, the term "variant" covers any sequence which has at least about 40%, more preferably at least about 60%, more preferably yet at least about 75% and most preferably at least about 90% identical residues (either nucleotides or amino acids) to a sequence of the present invention. The percentage of identical residues is determined by aligning the two sequences to be compared, determining the number of identical residues in the aligned portion, dividing that number by the total length of the inventive, or queried, sequence and multiplying the result by 100.

Polynucleotide or polypeptide sequences may be aligned, and percentage of identical nucleotides in a specified region may be determined against another polynucleotide, using computer algorithms that are publicly available. Two exemplary algorithms for aligning and identifying the similarity of polynucleotide sequences are the BLASTN and FASTA algorithms. The similarity of polypeptide sequences may be examined using the BLASTP or FASTX algorithms. Both the BLASTN and BLASTP software are available on the NCBI anonymous FTP server (ftp://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) under /blast/executables/. The BLASTN algorithm version 2.0.4 [Feb-24-1998], set to the default parameters described in the documentation and distributed with the algorithm, is preferred for use in the determination of variants according to the present invention. The use of the BLAST family of algorithms, including BLASTN and BLASTP, is described at NCBI's website at URL http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/BLAST/newblast.html and in the publication of Altschul, Stephen F., et al. (1997), "Gapped BLAST and PSI-BLAST: a new generation of protein database search programs", *Nucleic Acids Res. 25*:3389-3402. The computer algorithm FASTA is available on the Internet at the ftp site ftp://ftp.virginia.edu/pub/fasta/. Version 2.0u4, February 1996, set to the default parameters described in the documentation and distributed with the algorithm, is preferred for use in the determination of variants according to the present invention. The use of the FASTA algorithm is described in W.R. Pearson and D.J. Lipman, "Improved Tools for Biological Sequence Analysis," *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 85*:2444-2448 (1988) and W.R. Pearson, "Rapid and Sensitive Sequence Comparison with FASTP and FASTA," *Methods in Enzymology 183*:63-98 (1990). The use of the FASTX algorithm is described in Pearson, W.R., Wood, T., Zhang, Z. and Miller, W., "Comparison of DNA sequences with protein sequences," *Genomics 46*(1):24-36 (1997).

The following running parameters are preferred for determination of alignments and similarities using BLASTN that contribute to the E values and percentage identity: Unix running command: blastall -p blastn -d embldb -e 10 -G 1 -E 1 -r 2 -v 50 -b 50 -i queryseq –o results; and parameter default values:

-p Program Name [String]

-d Database [String]

-e Expectation value (E) [Real]

-G Cost to open a gap (zero invokes default behavior) [Integer]

-E Cost to extend a gap (zero invokes default behavior) [Integer]

-r Reward for a nucleotide match (blastn only) [Integer]

-v Number of one-line descriptions (V) [Integer]

-b Number of alignments to show (B) [Integer]

-i Query File [File In]

-o BLAST report Output File [File Out] Optional

For BLASTP the following running parameters are preferred: blastall –p blastp –d swissprotdb –e 10 –G 1 –E 1 –v 50 –b 50 –i queryseq –o results

-p Program Name [String]

-d Database [String]

-e Expectation value (E) [Real]

-G Cost to open a gap (zero invokes default behavior) [Integer]

-E Cost to extend a gap (zero invokes default behavior) [Integer]

-v Number of one-line descriptions (v) [Integer]

-b Number of alignments to show (b) [Integer]

-I Query File [File In]

-o BLAST report Output File [File Out] Optional

The "hits" to one or more database sequences by a queried sequence produced by BLASTN, BLASTP, FASTA, or a similar algorithm, align and identify similar portions of sequences. The hits are arranged in order of the degree of similarity and the length of sequence overlap. Hits to a database sequence generally represent an overlap over only a fraction of the sequence length of the queried sequence.

The BLASTN and FASTA algorithms also produce "Expect" values for alignments. The Expect value (E) indicates the number of hits one can "expect" to see over a certain number of contiguous sequences by chance when searching a database of a certain size. The Expect value is used as a significance threshold for determining whether the hit to a database, such as the preferred EMBL database, indicates true similarity. For example, an E value of 0.1 assigned to a hit is interpreted as meaning that in a database of the size of the EMBL database, one might expect to see 0.1 matches over the aligned portion of the sequence with a similar score simply by chance. By this

criterion, the aligned and matched portions of the sequences then have a probability of 90% of being the same. For sequences having an E value of 0.01 or less over aligned and matched portions, the probability of finding a match by chance in the EMBL database is 1% or less using the BLASTN or FASTA algorithm.

According to one embodiment, "variant" polynucleotides, with reference to each of the polynucleotides of the present invention, preferably comprise sequences having the same number or fewer nucleic acids than each of the polynucleotides of the present invention and producing an E value of 0.01 or less when compared to the polynucleotide of the present invention. That is, a variant polynucleotide is any sequence that has at least a 99% probability of being the same as the polynucleotide of the present invention, measured as having an E value of 0.01 or less using the BLASTN or FASTA algorithms set at the default parameters. According to a preferred embodiment, a variant polynucleotide is a sequence having the same number or fewer nucleic acids than a polynucleotide of the present invention that has at least a 99% probability of being the same as the polynucleotide of the present invention, measured as having an E value of 0.01 or less using the BLASTN or FASTA algorithms set at the default parameters.

Variant polynucleotide sequences will generally hybridize to the recited polynucleotide sequence under stringent conditions. As used herein, "stringent conditions" refers to prewashing in a solution of 6X SSC, 0.2% SDS; hybridizing at 65 °C, 6X SSC, 0.2% SDS overnight; followed by two washes of 30 minutes each in 1X SSC, 0.1% SDS at 65 °C and two washes of 30 minutes each in 0.2X SSC, 0.1% SDS at 65 °C.

As used herein, the term "*x*-mer," with reference to a specific value of "*x*," refers to a sequence comprising at least a specified number ("*x*") of contiguous residues of any of the polynucleotides or polypeptides identified as SEQ ID NO: 1-20. The value of *x* may be from about 20 to about 600, depending upon the specific sequence.

Polynucleotides and polypeptides of the present invention comprehend polynucleotides and polypeptides comprising at least a specified number of contiguous residues (*x*-mers) of any of the polynucleotides or polypeptides identified as SEQ ID NO: 1-20 or their variants. According to preferred embodiments, the value of *x* is preferably at least 20, more preferably at least 40, more preferably yet at least 60, and most

preferably at least 80. Thus, polynucleotides and polypeptides of the present invention include polynucleotides or polypeptides comprising a 20-mer, a 40-mer, a 60-mer, an 80-mer, a 100-mer, a 120-mer, a 150-mer, a 180-mer, a 220-mer a 250-mer, or a 300-mer, 400-mer, 500-mer or 600-mer of a polynucleotide or polypeptide identified as SEQ ID NO: 1-20 or a variant thereof.

The inventive polynucleotides may be isolated by high throughput sequencing of cDNA libraries prepared from lymph node stromal cells of *fsn* -/- mice as described below in Example 1. Alternatively, oligonucleotide probes based on the sequences provided in SEQ ID NO: 1-10 can be synthesized and used to identify positive clones in either cDNA or genomic DNA libraries from lymph node stromal cells of *fsn* -/- mice by means of hybridization or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) techniques. Probes can be shorter than the sequences provided herein but should be at least about 10, preferably at least about 15 and most preferably at least about 20 nucleotides in length. Hybridization and PCR techniques suitable for use with such oligonucleotide probes are well known in the art (see, for example, Mullis, et al., *Cold Spring Harbor Symp. Quant. Biol.*, *51*:263, 1987; Erlich ed., *PCR Technology*, Stockton Press, NY, 1989; Maniatis et al., *Molecular Cloning – A Laboratory Manual*, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, NY, 1989). Positive clones may be analyzed by restriction enzyme digestion, DNA sequencing or the like.

In addition, DNA sequences of the present invention may be generated by synthetic means using techniques well known in the art. Equipment for automated synthesis of oligonucleotides is commercially available from suppliers such as Perkin Elmer/Applied Biosystems Division (Foster City, CA) and may be operated according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Polypeptides of the present invention may be produced recombinantly by inserting a DNA sequence that encodes the polypeptide into an expression vector and expressing the polypeptide in an appropriate host. Any of a variety of expression vectors known to those of ordinary skill in the art may be employed. Expression may be achieved in any appropriate host cell that has been transformed or transfected with an expression vector containing a DNA molecule that encodes a recombinant polypeptide. Suitable host cells include prokaryotes, yeast and higher eukaryotic cells. Preferably, the

host cells employed are *E. coli*, insect, yeast or a mammalian cell line such as COS or CHO. The DNA sequences expressed in this manner may encode naturally occurring polypeptides, portions of naturally occurring polypeptides, or other variants thereof.

In a related aspect, polypeptides are provided that comprise at least a functional portion of a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of sequences provided in SEQ ID NO: 11-20 and variants thereof. As used herein, the "functional portion" of a polypeptide is that portion which contains the active site essential for affecting the function of the polypeptide, for example, the portion of the molecule that is capable of binding one or more reactants. The active site may be made up of separate portions present on one or more polypeptide chains and will generally exhibit high binding affinity. Such functional portions generally comprise at least about 5 amino acid residues, more preferably at least about 10, and most preferably at least about 20 amino acid residues. Functional portions of the inventive polypeptides may be identified by first preparing fragments of the polypeptide, by either chemical or enzymatic digestion of the polypeptide or mutation analysis of the polynucleotide that encodes for the polypeptide, and subsequently expressing the resultant mutant polypeptides. The polypeptide fragments or mutant polypeptides are then tested to determine which portions retain the biological activity of the full-length polypeptide.

Portions and other variants of the inventive polypeptides may be generated by synthetic or recombinant means. Synthetic polypeptides having fewer than about 100 amino acids, and generally fewer than about 50 amino acids, may be generated using techniques well known to those of ordinary skill in the art. For example, such polypeptides may be synthesized using any of the commercially available solid-phase techniques, such as the Merrifield solid-phase synthesis method, where amino acids are sequentially added to a growing amino acid chain. *See* Merrifield, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* *85*:2149-2146, 1963. Equipment for automated synthesis of polypeptides is commercially available from suppliers such as Perkin Elmer/Applied BioSystems, Inc. (Foster City, CA), and may be operated according to the manufacturer's instructions. Variants of a native polypeptide may be prepared using standard mutagenesis techniques, such as oligonucleotide-directed site-specific mutagenesis (see, for example, Kunkel, T.,

Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 82:488-492, 1985). Sections of DNA sequence may also be removed using standard techniques to permit preparation of truncated polypeptides.

Since the polynucleotide sequences of the present invention have been derived from *fsn* -/- mouse lymph node stromal cells, they likely encode proteins that have important role(s) in growth and development of the immune system, and in responses of the immune system to tissue injury and inflammation as well as other disease states. Some of the polynucleotides contain sequences that code for signal sequences, or transmembrane domains, which identify the protein products as secreted molecules or receptors. Such protein products are likely to be growth factors, cytokines, or their cognate receptors. The polypeptide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 13 has more than 25% similarity to known members of the tumour necrosis factor (TNF) receptor family of proteins and is thus likely to have similar biological functions.

In particular, the inventive polypeptides may have important roles in processes such as: modulation of immune responses; differentiation of precursor immune cells into specialized cell types; cell migration; cell proliferation and cell-cell interaction. The polypeptides may be important in the defence of the body against infectious agents, and thus be of importance in maintaining a disease-free environment. These polypeptides may act as modulators of skin cells, especially since immune cells are known to infiltrate skin during tissue insult, causing growth and differentiation of skin cells. In addition, these proteins may be immunologically active, making them important therapeutic targets in a whole range of disease states.

In one aspect, the present invention provides methods for using one or more of the inventive polypeptides or polynucleotides to treat disorders in a patient. As used herein, a "patient" refers to any warm-blooded animal, preferably a human.

In this aspect, the polypeptide or polynucleotide is generally present within a pharmaceutical composition or a vaccine. Pharmaceutical compositions may comprise one or more polypeptides, each of which may contain one or more of the above sequences (or variants thereof), and a physiologically acceptable carrier. Vaccines may comprise one or more of the above polypeptides and a non-specific immune response amplifier, such as an adjuvant or a liposome, into which the polypeptide is incorporated.

Alternatively, a vaccine or pharmaceutical composition of the present invention may contain DNA encoding one or more polypeptides as described above, such that the polypeptide is generated *in situ*. In such vaccines and pharmaceutical compositions, the DNA may be present within any of a variety of delivery systems known to those of ordinary skill in the art, including nucleic acid expression systems, and bacterial and viral expression systems. Appropriate nucleic acid expression systems contain the necessary DNA sequences for expression in the patient (such as a suitable promoter and terminator signal). Bacterial delivery systems involve the administration of a bacterium (such as Bacillus-Calmette-Guerin) that expresses an immunogenic portion of the polypeptide on its cell surface. In a preferred embodiment, the DNA may be introduced using a viral expression system (*e.g.*, vaccinia or other poxvirus, retrovirus, or adenovirus), which may involve the use of a non-pathogenic, or defective, replication competent virus. Techniques for incorporating DNA into such expression systems are well known in the art. The DNA may also be "naked," as described, for example, in Ulmer et al., *Science 259*:1745-1749, 1993 and reviewed by Cohen, *Science 259*:1691-1692, 1993. The uptake of naked DNA may be increased by coating the DNA onto biodegradable beads, which are efficiently transported into the cells.

Routes and frequency of administration, as well as dosage, will vary from individual to individual. In general, the pharmaceutical compositions and vaccines may be administered by injection (*e.g.*, intradermal, intramuscular, intravenous or subcutaneous), intranasally (*e.g.*, by aspiration) or orally. In general, the amount of polypeptide present in a dose (or produced *in situ* by the DNA in a dose) ranges from about 1 pg to about 100 mg per kg of host, typically from about 10 pg to about 1 mg per kg of host, and preferably from about 100 pg to about 1 μg per kg of host. Suitable dose sizes will vary with the size of the patient, but will typically range from about 0.1 ml to about 5 ml.

While any suitable carrier known to those of ordinary skill in the art may be employed in the pharmaceutical compositions of this invention, the type of carrier will vary depending on the mode of administration. For parenteral administration, such as subcutaneous injection, the carrier preferably comprises water, saline, alcohol, a lipid, a wax or a buffer. For oral administration, any of the above carriers or a solid carrier, such

as mannitol, lactose, starch, magnesium stearate, sodium saccharine, talcum, cellulose, glucose, sucrose, and magnesium carbonate, may be employed. Biodegradable microspheres (*e.g.*, polylactic galactide) may also be employed as carriers for the pharmaceutical compositions of this invention. Suitable biodegradable microspheres are disclosed, for example, in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,897,268 and 5,075,109.

Any of a variety of adjuvants may be employed in the vaccines derived from this invention to non-specifically enhance the immune response. Most adjuvants contain a substance designed to protect the antigen from rapid catabolism, such as aluminum hydroxide or mineral oil, and a non-specific stimulator of immune responses, such as lipid A, *Bordetella pertussis* or *M. tuberculosis*. Suitable adjuvants are commercially available as, for example, Freund's Incomplete Adjuvant and Freund's Complete Adjuvant (Difco Laboratories, Detroit, MI), and Merck Adjuvant 65 (Merck and Company, Inc., Rahway, NJ). Other suitable adjuvants include alum, biodegradable microspheres, monophosphoryl lipid A and Quil A.

The polynucleotides of the present invention may also be used as markers for tissue, as chromosome markers or tags, in the identification of genetic disorders, and for the design of oligonucleotides for examination of expression patterns using techniques well known in the art, such as the microarray technology available from Synteni (Palo Alto, CA). Partial polynucleotide sequences disclosed herein may be employed to obtain full length genes by, for example, screening of DNA expression libraries using hybridization probes or PCR primers based on the inventive sequences.

The proteins provided by the present invention may additionally be used in assays to determine biological activity, to raise antibodies, to isolate corresponding ligands or receptors, in assays to quantify levels of protein or cognate corresponding ligand or receptor, as anti-inflammatory agents, and in compositions for the treatment of diseases of skin, connective tissue and the immune system.

Example 1

ISOLATION OF cDNA SEQUENCES FROM LYMPH NODE STROMAL CELL EXPRESSION LIBRARIES

The cDNA sequences of the present invention were obtained by high-throughput sequencing of cDNA expression libraries constructed from rodent *fsn* -/- lymph node stromal cells as described below.

cDNA Libraries from Lymph Node Stromal Cells (MLSA and MLSE)

Lymph nodes were removed from flaky skin *fsn* -/- mice, the cells dissociated and the resulting single cell suspension placed in culture. After four passages, the cells were harvested. Total RNA, isolated using TRIzol Reagent (BRL Life Technologies, Gaithersburg, MD), was used to obtain mRNA using a Poly(A) Quik mRNA isolation kit (Stratagene, La Jolla, CA), according to the manufacturer's specifications. A cDNA expression library (referred to as the MLSA library) was then prepared from the mRNA by reverse transcriptase synthesis using a Lambda ZAP cDNA library synthesis kit (Stratagene, La Jolla, CA). A second cDNA expression library, referred to as the MLSE library, was prepared exactly as above except that the cDNA was inserted into the mammalian expression vector pcDNA3 (Invitrogen, Carlsbad CA).

The nucleotide sequence of the cDNA clone isolated from the MLSE library is given in SEQ ID NO: 1, with the corresponding amino acid sequence being provided in SEQ ID NO: 11. The nucleotide sequences of the cDNA clones isolated from the MLSA library are given in SEQ ID NO: 2-10, with the corresponding amino acid sequences being provided in SEQ ID NO: 12-20, respectively.

Subtracted cDNA Library from flaky skin Lymph Node Stromal Cells (MLSS)

Stromal cells from flaky skin mice lymph nodes and 3T3 fibroblasts were grown in culture and the total RNA extracted from these cells using established protocols. Total RNA from both populations was isolated using TRIzol Reagent (Gibco BRL Life Technologies, Gaitherburg, MD) and used to obtain mRNA using either a Poly (A) Quik mRNA isolation kit (Stratagene, La Jolla, CA) or Quick Prep(R) Micro mRNA

purification kit (Pharmacia, Uppsala, Sweden). Double-stranded cDNA from flaky skin lymph node stromal cell mRNA was prepared by reverse transcriptase synthesis using a lambda ZAP cDNA library synthesis kit (Stratagene) that had been ligated with *Eco*RI adaptors and digested with *Xho*I to produce double-stranded fragments with *Eco*RI and *Xho*I overhanging ends.

Double-stranded cDNA from 3T3 fibroblasts was prepared using the Superscript II reverse transcriptase (BRL Life Technologies) followed by treatment with DNA polymerase I and RnaseH (BRL Life Technologies). Double-stranded 3T3 cDNA was then digested with restriction endonucleases *Alu*I and *Rsa*I (BRL Life Technologies) to produce blunt-ended fragments. A 20-fold excess of *Alu*I /*Rsa*I-digested 3T3 cDNA was hybridized with the *Eco*RI/*Xho*I flaky skin lymph node stromal cell cDNA in the following hybridisation solution: 50% formamide, 5xSSC, 10mM NaH_2PO_4 pH7.5, 1mM EDTA, 0.1% SDS, 200µg yeast tRNA (Boehringer Mannheim) at 37°C for 24 hours. Hybridized flaky skin lymph node stromal cell cDNA and 3T3 cDNA was then phenol/chloroform extracted and ethanol precipitated. The cDNA was size-fractionated over a Sepharose CL-2B gel filtration column as described in the Lambda ZAP cDNA library synthesis protocol (Stratagene). Flaky skin lymph node stromal cell-specific cDNA was preferentially ligated into ZAP express vector (Stratagene) by virtue of *Eco*RI/*Xho*I ends. Chimeric cDNA between flaky skin lymph node stromal cell cDNA and 3T3 cDNA would not be cloned due to non-compatible ends, and the subtracted cDNA library was packaged using Gigapack III Gold packaging extract (Stratagene).

EXAMPLE 2

CHARACTERIZATION OF ISOLATED cDNA SEQUENCES

The isolated cDNA sequences were compared to sequences in the EMBL DNA database using the computer algorithm BLASTN, and the corresponding predicted protein sequences (DNA translated to protein in each of 6 reading frames) were compared to sequences in the SwissProt database using the computer algorithm BLASTP. Specifically, comparisons of DNA sequences provided in SEQ ID NO: 1-10 to sequences in the EMBL (Release 58, March 1999) DNA database, and amino acid sequences provided in SEQ ID NO: 11-20 to sequences in the SwissProt (Release 37) and TREMBL

(Release 8 and updates until 23 January 1999) databases were made as of March 21, 1999. The cDNA sequences of SEQ ID NO: 1-10, and their corresponding predicted amino acid sequences (SEQ ID NO: 11-20, respectively) were determined to have less than 75% identical nucleotides or amino acid residues (determined as described above) to sequences in the EMBL and SwissProt databases using the computer algorithms BLASTN and BLASTP, respectively.

Isolated cDNA sequences and their corresponding predicted protein sequences, were computer analyzed for the presence of signal sequences identifying secreted molecules. Isolated cDNA sequences that have a signal sequence at a putative start site within the sequence are provided in SEQ ID NO: 4-6 and 9-10. The isolated cDNA sequences were also computer analyzed for the presence of transmembrane domains coding for putative membrane-bound molecules. Isolated cDNA sequences that have one or more transmembrane domain(s) within the sequence are provided in SEQ ID NO: 1-3, 7 and 8.

Using automated search programs to screen against sequences coding for known molecules reported to be of therapeutic and/or diagnostic use, the isolated cDNA sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3 was determined to encode a predicted protein sequence (SEQ ID NO: 13) that appears to be a member of the tumour necrosis factor (TNF) receptor family of proteins. A family member is here defined to have at least 25% identical amino acid residues in the translated polypeptide to a known protein or member of a protein family. Proteins of the TNF/NGF-receptor family are involved in the proliferation, differentiation and death of many cell types including B and T lymphocytes. Residues 18-55 of SEQ ID NO: 13 show a high degree of similarity to the Prosite motif for TNF/NGF receptor family (Banner D.W., d'Arcy A., Janes W., Gentz R., Schoenfeld H.-J., Broger C., Loetscher H., Lesslauer W. *Cell 73*:431-445 (1993). This motif contributes to the ligand binding domain of the molecule and is thus essential to its function. (Gruss H.J. and Dower S. Tumor necrosis factor ligand superfamily: involvement in the pathology of malignant lymphomas, *Blood 85*:3378-3404 (1995).

The polypeptide of SEQ ID NO: 13 is therefore likely to influence the growth, differentiation and activation of several cell types, and may be usefully developed as an

agent for the treatment of skin wounds, and the treatment and diagnosis of cancers, inflammatory diseases, and growth and developmental defects.